

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 PEKING 00441 120846Z

17

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAM-01 IO-11 OMB-01 SAJ-01 ACDA-05 /087 W

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R 120707Z MAR 76

FM USLO PEKING

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5297

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 441

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CH

SUBJECT: DEMOBILIZATION AND RECRUITMENT OF PLA PERSONNEL

1. SUMMARY: THERE ARE SEVERAL INDICATIONS FROM WIDESPREAD PARTS OF THE PRC THAT THE PLA IS CURRENTLY CARRYING OUT SIZEABLE DEMOBILIZATION AND RECRUITMENT. THIS HAS LED TO SOME INCREASED VISIBILITY OF THE PLA. IT DOES NOT, HOWEVER, APPEAR TO BE RELATED TO THE CURRENT POLITICAL STRUGGLE. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING AN EARLY MARCH RAIL TRIP TO CHANGSHA, USLO OFFICER SAW TWELVE CARLOADS OF PLA SOLDIERS (1200 TO 1300) LOADING AT HSINHSIANG, HONAN. THE SOLDIERS, ALL OF WHOM LOOKED LIKE VETERANS WITH SEVERAL YEARS EXPERIENCE, CARRIED BUNDLES WHICH APPARENTLY WERE GIFTS FOR THEIR FAMILIES, MADE LONG FAREWELLS TO THEIR PLA COMRADES REMAINING BEHIND, AND GENERALLY APPEARED RELAXED. THE IMPRESSION GIVEN WAS THAT THE SOLDIERS WERE BEING DEMOBILIZED AND RETURNING HOME. THERE WERE SEVERAL OTHER CARLOADS OF PLA OBSERVED ALONG THE ROUTE, AGAIN CARRYING PACKAGES--NOT WEAPONS--AND IN APPARENTLY HIGH SPIRITS.

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PAGE 02 PEKING 00441 120846Z

3. AT THE CHENGCHOW, HONAN, RAILWAY STATION A RED BANNER

WAS STRUNG NEAR THE STATION EXIT WELCOMING THE RETURN OF DEMOBILIZED SOLDIERS. THE BANNER APPEARED TO BE MEANT FOR SEVERAL GROUPS OF RETURNEES. A SLOGAN AT THE YUEH YANG, HUNAN, STATION WELCOMED THE RETURN OF THE "GLORIOUS 8TH BRIGADE." IT WAS UNCLEAR FROM THE SLOGAN WHETHER THIS REFERRED TO THE TRANSFER OF THE UNIT BACK TO THE AREA OR THE DEMOBILIZATION OF A UNIT ORIGINALLY FROM YUEH YANG. A BRITISH EMBOFF SAW POSTERS WELCOMING DEMOBILIZED SOLDIERS IN THE SUBURBS OF CANTON, AND IN PEKING SHOPPING DISTRICTS RECENTLY UNUSUALLY LARGE NUMBERS OF PLA HAVE BEEN SEEN, INCLUDING MANY WHO APPARENTLY WERE BUYING GIFTS FOR THEIR FAMILIES BACK IN THE PROVINCES. THE SOVIET MILITARY ATTACHE COMMENTED TO US ON MARCH 12 THAT HE THOUGHT THERE HAD BEEN QUITE A LARGE DEMOBILIZATION OF PLA IN THE PAST FOUR MONTHS, BUT THAT THIS HAD

BEEN MAINLY COMPLETED BY THE END OF FEBRUARY.

4. CONCURRENTLY WITH THIS DEMOBILIZATION OF SOLDIERS,

RECRUITMENT DRIVES HAVE BEEN GOING ON IN SIAN, CANTON, AND TO A LIMITED EXTENT IN PEKING. THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR SAW A MAJOR RECRUITMENT EFFORT IN SIAN TWO WEEKS AGO COMPLETE WITH BANNERS, A PARADE, AND BEATINGS OF GONGS. BRITISH EMBOFF SAW LARGE NUMBER OF TRUCKS IN CANTON WITH RECRUITMENT SLOGAN "ONE MAN JOINING THE ARMY BRINGS GLORY TO THE WHOLE FAMILY"

AND NUMEROUS HOUSEHOLDS WITH SLOGAN "GLORIOUS FAMILY" ON DOOR WHICH HE WAS TOLD MEANT AT LEAST ONE MEMBER OF THE FAMILY HAD JOINED THE PLA. WE HAVE ALSO NOTICED RECENTLY AN OCCASIONAL SLOGAN SUGGESTING PLA RECRUITMENT IN PEKING.

5. COMMENT: WE ARE NOT SURE WHETHER THIS RECRUITMENT/ DEMOBILIZATION IS AN ANNUAL OCCURRENCE IN THE PERIOD JUST AFTER SPRING FESTIVAL, BUT USLO OFFICERS HAVE NOT NOTED THIS LEVEL OF SUCH ACTIVITY IN OTHER YEARS. THESE ACTIVITIES DO NOT APPEAR TO BE RELATED TO THE CURRENT ANTI-RIGHTIST CAMPAIGN, AND WE HAVE SEEN NO EVIDENCE OF INCREASED USE OF PLA PERSONNEL FOR PUBLIC ORDER FUNCTIONS.

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